



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Senator Martins' Black History Month Dr. Martin Luther King Awards Inspires and Honors Community

JACK M. MARTINS February 13, 2013

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Senator Jack M. Martins hosted his 3rd annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards to a standing-room only crowd that spilled out into the hallways at the Elmont Library Theatre this past Sunday afternoon. Over 450 residents packed the Library to honor community activists and listen to Dr. King's inspiring "I Have a Dream Speech." The program was a rich collection of culturally nourishing music and spoken word throughout a ceremony that has

won rave reviews.

Joining Senator Martins in the awards program and presentations were South Floral Park Mayor Geoffrey Prime, Sewanhaka Central High School Superintendent Dr. Ralph Ferrie, Elmont Assistant Supt. Kathy Safrey, Principals Walter Aksionoff, John Capozzi, Debbie Lidowsky, Mary Natoli, Ken Rosner and Hope Kranidas. Senator Martins also hosted special guest, Consul General for Security Arthur Barrington of Trinidad and Tobago during the awards programs as well.

The program began with the Sewanhaka High School Jazz Band and Choir performing several crowd favorites. The Elmont Fire Department Color Guard marched into the theatre and PAGE 31 Magazine co-founder Vladimir Crevecoeur recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Sandra Smith, chairperson of the Elmont Coalition for Sustainable Development welcomed the capacity crowd and gave reflections of the program.

Rev. Frantz Daniel Jean of the French Speaking Baptist Church of Elmont gave an inspiring invocation. During the prayer, Senator Martins asked that the community have a moment of silence for Tejraj "TJ" Antooa and the Dennis Family children- Aaron, Aidan and Maya during a very difficult time for both of their families.

Local artist and journalist Carl Anthony LaMarre performed a moving rendition of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream Speech" which brought the house down with emotion. "To have a community unite and gather together for such a momentous occasion will serve as a memorable experience I'll forever treasure. I'm grateful to be surrounded by such motivated individuals that have cultivated our community. I hope Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is proud of the togetherness that our town of Elmont exudes on a regular basis and that I showed him the proper justice in delivering his speech as a proud African American.

Elmont Golden Gloves Boxer Herve Duroseau introduced Senator Jack Martins by saying, "Jack Martins is a fighter like I am. He doesn't get pushed around, and he stands up for communities like ours. That's why he's my friend."

Senator Martins congratulated the honorees, families and guests for making the ceremony a great success. "Today is a special day for our greater community. Dr. King's legacy is strong, vibrant and can be seen in the people we honor today. When you watch what our fellow neighbors have achieved, and listen to their biographies, you clearly see the power and impact of their actions. You also see why the greater Elmont community is so special."

Laurent Luke, founder and creator of "Soulfood Society" performed a spoken word segment entitled "Blind Man on Ground Zero." The piece is an insightful work on people's lives and the impact that one's actions have to our greater world. "I really feel the piece I performed was perfect to perform in front of teachers, principals, peers and parents who've watched me grow up from a young boy to an ambitious, goal driven man. Elmont has a lot of undiscovered talent and has gone through many tragedies and bad news for families we all know in recent months. I've learned that words are the most powerful weapons on earth. For the Elmont community gathered at the library Sunday, seeing a young artist like myself go up on stage, take the microphone and say before I begin my piece, "Close your eyes and open your hearts," and then speaking from my heart through spoken, and ending with, I'm just a young man saved by Grace, if anyone hear me, help me tear down hate and build love. I feel Senator Martins MLK awards was the birth of Legends in Elmont. It was an inspiring day for our community."

Elmont Memorial High School wowed the audience during an entertainment section with a piece from their upcoming musical show "Bye Bye Birdie." The cast of the musical performed two songs from the hit Broadway Show that will be performed in March at Elmont Memorial High School.

The awards program kicked off with the Dr. King Elementary honors. The Dr. King elementary school awards were presented to young people identified by their school, principal and teachers for character, leadership and responsibility. The awards were presented to: Lea Stewart and Matthew Bediako from Dutch Broadway School. Tacarra Verene and Nevin Balgobin from the Clara H. Carlson School. Michael Lisojo and Indali Parris-Guilbaud were honored from Stewart Manor School. Janasia Allen and Patrick Ijejirika were presented the award from Covert Avenue School. Joining Senator Martins in the presentation was Elmont School District Assistant Superintendent Kathy Safrey and South Floral Park Mayor Geoffrey Prime.

The Senator Martins Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award for High School honorees highlighted members of our greater community in high school for leadership, character, community spirit and mentoring. High School honorees for the awards included: Tristan Brown, Rene Amell, Lizette Terry, Natalie Santiago, Kristian Stukes, Kieran O'Reilly, Alden Jules, Collins Ihaza, Brandon Lawrence, Rahaman Adenlola, Kaela Hilaire, Wendell Jules, Rachel Wisniewski, AJ James, Rachel Havrylkoff, Timothy Lewis, Christon Beharry, Tamera Canning, Shenley Boyce, Giovanna Braganza and Nicholas St. Louis. Joining Senator Martins in presenting the High School honors were Elmont Memorial High School Principal John Capozzi, Sewanhaka High School Principal Debbie Lidowsky and Superintendent Dr. Ralph Ferrie.

The Senator Martins Dr. Martin Luther King Awards for young adults were presented to community rising stars that display strong leadership traits and a commitment to community. The honorees were: Darian Bryan, Michael Dugue, Nachbi Lacossiere, Michael Bernard, Jimi Awoliyi and Marlon Fearon, Jr. Senator Martins presented those honors as biographies were read by narrators.

The Senator Martins Adult honorees are known throughout the area as beacons of true social, professional and community spirit whose impact on the lives of our young people, community, neighborhood and state are unmatched. They are leaders and role models who make a difference and shy from the limelight. The adult honorees were: Aloysius Johnson, Wilhemina Nyarko, Pat G'Orge Walker, George Ingram, Amy Persaud, Eddie Alston, Anthony Maffea, Sr. and Richard DeBrosse.

During the adult presentations, honorees gave brief speeches where they touched collectively on their involvement in the community and their love of giving back and helping others. Al Johnson ended his speech by having the entire audience yell "ELMONT" together as a sign of unity in the community.

To round out the ceremony, the local group "Young, Gifted and Black" led by Leonard Corley did a selection of pieces that highlighted the impact that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has had in the civil rights struggle and the quest for equality of opportunity and hope. Senator Martins closed the program and Timothy Jean gave a very inspiring benediction.